

2007 Northside Blvd.,
South Bend, Indiana.
January 12, 1969

Joshua Lederberg,
The Washington Post,
1515 L. Street, NW,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Lederberg:

I am ashamed that your answer to Dr. D. E. Wooldridge on the subject of whether man is "only a machine" is so weak. I should imagine by now that you would have better ammunition in this seemingly endless and futile war.

Of course, man is NOT simply a "mere machine," and of course it is false to say that "we find man to exhibit no tissues or functions that would except him from this way of analyzing human nature." Such a pseudo-scientific way of thinking-- which you bless as among "several excellent syntheses of present-day thought in biology" -- ought to be thrown out with the cat.

You need only ask Dr. Wooldridge if he can explain all the symbolic processes which are, as far as we know, (ah! a hooker, I hear you saying) limited only to the human being. Do we know of any "nonliving matter" which:

- a. creates art, or speaks a language. (in its fullest sense).
- b. dreams
- c. laughs ?

This, just for starters. As a number of writers in the 20th century have pointed out, the process of symbolization is a distinctly human process, is fundamentally unknowable, and therefore one of those "mysteries of human nature that are, in principle, beyond the reach of scientific investigation." Some bibliography to get you started: Chesterton's The Everlasting Man; Suzanne Langer's Philosophy in a New Key; Albert Levi's new book on Science and Literature (I forget the title).

I write this hastily, having more important things to do. Well-- I'll take that back. It irritates me to read such 19th century positivistic drivel still being pumped out in our popular press. And I should think that you would take more care.

Cordially,

Lawrence J. Clipper
Lawrence J. Clipper.

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